



# BIRDIE'S MOTHER.



1882.

LONDON: WELLS GARDNER, DARTON & Co.,  
Paternoster Buildings.



# Comparative Statement.



	£	s.	d.
Average annual expenditure in purchase of Intoxicating Drinks for every man, woman, and Child in the United Kingdom ... ..	4	9	0
Average annual consumption of Tea by every man, woman and child in the United Kingdom, $4\frac{1}{2}$ -lbs., say at 2/- per lb. ....	0	10	0

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Number of persons annually apprehended for drunkenness in England and Wales ... ..	203,989
Number of Lunatics ... ..	63,793

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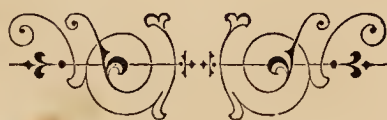
*Mr. Hoyle's evidence before a Select Committee of House of Lords, 1877.*



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❖ BIRDIE'S ❖ MOTHER. ❖





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BIRDIE'S

MOTHER




LONDON: WELLS GARDNER, DARTON & Co.,  
Paternoster Row, E.C.

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## ✧ Birdie's ✧ Mother. ✧

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“T's of no use trying to be good. It's all very well for the parsons to talk, but if they only knew what it was to live here with *her*, they'd soon find out that all the talking and the preaching in the world can't make no difference. Sometimes I feel as if I couldn't bear it no longer, as if I must run away. Birdie would get on just as well without me, perhaps ; and I might be a better girl if I didn't **see** her coming home day after day, and night after night, as I do see her.”

And the girl who had spoken these words to herself sighed a weary sigh, that seemed to come from the very depths of her heart, and threw open the little attic window as high as it would go, and put her head out, as though she would fain see something beyond that miserable room, which was the only place in the world she could call home.

She was very young this poor Grace Martin; scarcely seventeen summers had passed over her head, and all through her life she had known hardly anything but sorrow, yet very far away in the distance she could remember a time when her father was alive, and when she used to walk with him on Sundays in the sweet green lanes, and gather the summer flowers to take home to Birdie, the little crippled baby sister, who never all through her life would be able to cull the bright blossoms for herself.

Then her father died, and she and her mother and Birdie left the neighbourhood of Highgate, and went to live in a narrow dismal London street, where the sun never seemed to shine, where the sweet song of the little birds was never heard.

They had lived in the same house ever since, only at first they had occupied the front parlour, then the back parlour, and several other moves, all for the worse, had brought them where we now find them to the wretched back attic, almost bare of furniture, where Grace is looking out of the window, and where poor little Birdie is lying asleep



on the miserable bed in the corner of the poor room.

"Yes, she would get on just as well without me ; at least, I think she would " ; but as the words passed Grace's lips, a keen sting of self-reproach came to the girl's heart, for it was a loving tender heart still, in spite of much that had come to that poor young life to harden and to sadden it.

She moved towards the bed, and there were tears in her blue eyes, as she looked pityingly upon the poor little pinched face, which told of so much suffering and want.

"Grace," said the little one, waking out of the sound sleep into which she had fallen, "Grace, has mother come home yet " ?

"No," was the answer spoken harshly and sullenly ; "and she ain't likely to come till night neither."

"Oh, Gracie, dear Gracie, don't be cross to her " !

"Cross ! I wonder who could help being cross, to see her drink away her earnings and mine too, to know if it was not for *that* we might be happy, and comfortable, and respectable, like other folks, instead of being laughed

at, and sneered at, and pointed at by the neighbours. Birdie, do you know what I was thinking of when you were asleep just now? I was thinking I had better go away and leave you. Perhaps if *she* knew that I was not here to look after you, she might stop at home more, and take care of you herself, for she does love you Birdie, although she has a strange way of showing it."

"Gracie, please don't talk like that, please don't leave me; I couldn't do without you dear, indeed I couldn't"!

"Couldn't you, darling"? and all the hardness went out of the young face as Grace took her little sister into her arms. "Couldn't you really do without me? then I'll stay, and try to bear it, though it's awful hard to be spoke to as *she* speaks to me, and I, trying to do all I can, and working as hard as I can."

She did work hard, poor thing. From six in the morning until six at night, with only half-an-hour's rest at breakfast-time, and an hour at dinner-time, she toiled at a printer's in the neighbourhood, never grumbling at what she did for Birdie, only feeling it "awful

hard" sometimes, that her mother never worked at all. If by any chance she *did* get a day's charing, the money she earned was spent at the Red Lion before she came home.

Sometimes she would bring in an orange for Birdie, but these occasions were very rare ones. Generally when she had been out for a day's work, she staggered up the narrow staircase, helplessly drunk—Grace's bitter reproaches, poor Birdie's pitiful little sobs, alike unheeded by her.

On that August day of which I am telling you, the elder sister had come home to bring in the younger one's dinner—a piece of untempting-looking rice pudding from the cook-shop. A crust left from her breakfast was all poor Grace had for herself, and she was very hungry and very weary.

"I've had my dinner, darling," she said as she propped Birdie up in the bed.

"Have you? Did you eat it in the shop?"

"It's very warm; I'll open the window a bit higher, if I can," said Grace, knowing quite well that it was already opened to its full height, but wishing to avoid answering her little sister's question.

So Birdie finished her meal, and Grace went back to her work, the child's last words to her ringing in her ears as she hurried along the crowded thoroughfares : " If mother's at home when you come back, you'll be kind to her, won't you dear " ? the little one had said ; " perhaps if you were kind it might make her better," and Grace began to wonder whether she had been quite kind, whether her stern uncompromising sense of right, her deeply-wounded pride, had not made her stern, and hard, and severe, instead of loving and gentle as Birdie always was.

" Oh ! if she'd only leave off that hateful drink, we might be happy yet," mused the poor girl ; " anyhow, I'll do as Birdie wishes, however bad she is to-night. I'll try not to scold and to rave. I'll do it for Birdie's sake, and for father's." And Grace meant to keep her resolution, only she did not ask God to help her to do it ; she did not think of Him, the meek and gentle Saviour, who did not condemn her who was brought before Him, taken in the very act of sin ; who bade those only condemn her who themselves were sinless.

She ran home very fast when the day's work was over, and there on the doorstep of the old tumble-down house was her mother, surrounded by a crowd.

The fiery blood of indignation mounted to the girl's brow. "Get in with you"! she said, taking the wretched woman's arm; "don't disgrace us more than you have already done."

"Disgrace you, my dear? I shouldn't think of such a thing; I've always kept myself respectable, and I hope I always shall."

Then came a loud jeering laugh from the rough, unsympathizing crowd.

By a great effort, Grace succeeded in raising her mother from the step, and closing the door upon her tormenters; then she managed to get her up the long flight of stairs into the dreary room, where poor little Birdie, with flushed cheek and trembling limbs, sat up in her bed, prepared for the sight that she knew would meet her eye.

"Oh mother, dear mother," she sobbed.

"My dear, my dear, I can't help it."

"Can't help it? who can then, I should like to know, if *you* can't? It's a shame of you, that it is. I'll run away and leave you; I



won't bear it no longer. It's only because of Birdie that I stay here."

"I'll take care of Birdie," answered the wretched mother, "I always do ; I have an orange for her now in my pocket. Ah ! Where is it ? One of those rude boys must have taken it from me " ; and then Birdie's mother cried like a child. Through it all Grace was angry and defiant, and her thoughts of her mother were harder than ever.

Next day she went off to her work, leaving the poor erring creature asleep. "I shan't come home to dinner, darling," she said to Birdie ; "there's a sausage roll in the cupboard that will do for you, and I want to do a bit of extra work to-day, because then to-morrow I shall be able to buy you that nice little mattress I told you about. There's five shillings in my old box now ; I only want one shilling more, and it will make you ever so comfortable, darling, quite like a little lady ; your poor little bones will rest so nicely, Birdie."

"You are so good to me, dear," answered the little cripple. "Oh, Grace, I do wish we could be happy " !



"We never shall be that, so long as *she* disgraces us as she does ; and there's no help for it—nothing to be done for her ; nothing."

"Nothing," mused poor Birdie, when she was left to her own thoughts ; "may be God might hear me, if I asked Him to take away the drink from mother."

She prayed the little simple prayer many times, she was praying it still, when her mother awoke, and heard her.

"Birdie," she said, "what are you saying"? "I was asking God to take away the drink from you, Mother," Birdie replied simply.

The poor woman knelt by the side of her child's bed. "My dear, my dear, I've asked it myself very often ; oftener than you can guess, or than Grace can guess ; but, Birdie, it's not me that drinks, it's not your father's wife, it's not your mother, it's the devil within me that leads me to it, and I can't cast him out."

"Jesus cast out devils ; it's in the Bible-story that Grace read me on Sunday," said Birdie, her eyes all brimming over with tears.

"My little one, I want to find Jesus, but I've lost the way."

“Mother, perhaps before very long Jesus will take me to live with Him. I heard Mrs. Brown, down in the back parlour, say something about it to Grace the other day, when she came up to see me and if I went, perhaps I might be able somehow to send and tell you how to come.”

“My darling, my little one, don’t talk like that, it would be worse than ever if you went.”

“Grace would take care of you, mother ; she is very good, very kind, she has saved up five shillings in her old box to buy me a mattress ; now that I’m so thin, this old one is so hard for me,—I shall be so comfortable when the new one comes ; perhaps it will come to-night, Grace only wants one more shilling to buy it with, and she is going to work extra time, to-day ; mother dear, you’ll stay with me all day, won’t you.”

“Yes, my dear, I’ll try to.”

She did try. I must do her this amount of justice, before I tell you the rest. We often try, and fail, and, much as I loathe the terrible sin of which she was the victim, much as I hate this demon of drink, I would ask you

whom God has kept from this fearful temptation, to be very merciful in your dealings with those who are the slaves of the most deadly enemy to which human flesh in its weakness bows down.

That poor woman on that day cleaned out the room as she had not done for months, and did all she could to make Birdie comfortable. The child was very happy in the thought of how pleased Gracie would be when she came home; suffering had not washed all hope out of the loving little heart, and Birdie built castles in the air for the future, and thought how nice it would be when she lay upon the soft new mattress, and mother stayed at home all day, and Gracie came back at night to a clean room, and a nice comfortable tea.

She dreamed of it all when the shadows of evening fell upon the little attic; and, tired of waiting for Grace, the heavy eyelids closed, and the child sank into a sound sleep.

Meanwhile there was a fierce battle going on between the angels of darkness and the angels of light; and the battle ended in victory for sin. Sad, most sad; still there

*had* been a battle. Not all at once had that fearful temptation been yielded to which came to Birdie's mother, whilst Birdie herself slept so peacefully, and dreamed such happy dreams. The moon had risen in the cloudless heavens, the stars, the eyes of God's own angels, peeped even into that wretched attic in the dismal London street, just telling their own sweet story of God's love over all things, and God's presence everywhere ; the door was opened quickly, almost noisily, and Gracie, her face bright with smiles, stood at her little sister's bedside.

"Birdie ! Birdie" ! she exclaimed, "I've got the shilling, I was determined to get it to-day, and now I've come for the other five ; and I'm going to run round for the mattress—and oh, I'll make your bed so comfortable for you, darling."

"Where's mother" ? she exclaimed.

"Mother ? why, out of course, as usual."

"She promised me not to go out ; I told her you were so good, Grace ; I told her about the mattress and the five shillings, and everything ; and she wants to find Jesus, Grace, and when I go to Him, I will try to tell her

how to come. Do you think I shall be able to" ?

A loud sharp cry from Grace, who had gone to her little tin box in the corner.

"What is it, Gracie? oh! please tell me, has anything hurt you" ?

But for once Grace could not speak. Pale and trembling she struck a light and looked round the room hopelessly; then she went up to the child's bed, the little empty box in her hand.

"Gracie, don't look like that, it frightens me so; where's the money" ?

"Gone."

"How has it gone" ?

"It has been stolen, and mother is the thief."

"Gracie, Gracie, please don't say it" !

"I will say it, for it is true. You say you told her I had saved up the money. You told her where it was; and she has taken it, you know where, and what for."

Poor Birdie could only cry, and ask Grace to forgive her.

"My darling, it is for you, I am so angry. I had worked so hard to save it up. I had



gone without my dinner so often" (the confession was wrung out of the poor girl's bitter anguish), "and now, oh now it has all gone, and it will take so long to save it up again, and your poor little bones ache so, and are so sore, Birdie."

The sisters sobbed together for a long, long time. It was the first time Gracie had ever been so crushed, and it was very touching to see how Birdie, in her little gentle quiet loving way, tried to comfort the poor girl.

"Perhaps I'll get fatter, dearie, and then I'll not feel the mattress so hard ; and indeed, indeed I do feel just as if you had given it me, Gracie, only I'm so sorry you went without your dinner so often ; you must not do it again, promise me that you won't."

But Grace could not speak, could not promise anything in her sorrow and her indignation. The minutes dragged slowly on, the candle burnt low in the socket, and there was silence in the poor attic, broken only at intervals by the sound of choking sobs.

Then came another sound, one which both



those poor children knew but too well—the heavy staggering step upon the staircase. Another minute and their mother stood in the room, the light of the moon falling upon her white scared face.

In her arms was the mattress—the very one Grace was to have brought home that night. A gleam of hope came into Grace's heart, to give way in an instant to the dullest, heaviest despair that had ever yet come there.

There was some one else at the door, some one else in the room ; a policeman's hand was on the miserable woman's arm, and his voice sounded harsh and stern as he said :

“I take you in charge for stealing that mattress out of Mr. Grant's shop five minutes ago.”

She did not answer; the shock had sobered her. She looked at her children for an instant, and then she said :

“Yes, I took it; it was for my little one there, she's very ill.”

Grace darted forward ; Birdie held her back. “Gracie, dear Gracie, for my sake, for father's sake, don't tell him about the five shillings.”

And Grace was silent, and the guilty woman went away with the policeman, not daring to look at her children.

When she got to the door she went back again, and kissed Birdie ; and then stood trembling before Grace, as though she dared not kiss *her*. The girl stooped and pressed her lips upon her forehead, and the painful scene was at an end.

The next morning Mrs. Martin was sentenced to a month's imprisonment with hard labour. She pleaded guilty, and said she was intoxicated, and did not know what she was about. From how many lips has that excuse been offered, when drink has led to some crime which, in their sober senses, the accused man or woman would never have committed !

Grace was more loving than ever to Birdie in the days that followed ; there was a little Mission Church just opened in a neighbouring street, and very often the elder sister used to go there, and come home and tell Birdie all that she had heard ; and the child was growing weaker every day, but somehow or another she was happier than she had been,

because, as she told Grace, mother wanted to be kept from the drink, and she couldn't get it in the prison.

One September morning, Grace did not go to work ; they did not expect their mother home for three days ; they thought that a month meant a calendar month, they had no idea it was only four weeks.

Birdie said she was tired, she did not want Grace to leave her. She had never made such a request before, and her sister could not find it in her heart to refuse it her.

" Grace, I wonder whether I shall see mother again" said the child.

" She will be home in three days ; three will soon pass away, dear."

The child smiled. " Three days is a long time when you feel so tired," she answered ; " if I should not be here, Gracie ; if I should have gone to Jesus, you'll tell her that I'll ask Him to send one of His own angels to show her how to come to me ; and you will come too, Grace, and there are no troubles there."

" Birdie, my little Birdie, do you feel worse " ?

“Not worse, only tired, and it’s getting very dark; you’ll be kind to mother, Grace, and help her to find the way.”

The door opened, and the mother was at home again.

“Grace, Birdie will you forgive me”?

Grace went up to her lovingly, and led her to the bed where Birdie lay, her eyes closed now, a smile, the sweetest they had ever seen there, upon her little pale face.

“Birdie, darling, won’t you speak to mother”?

“It’s getting light now, Gracie; tell mother to ask Jesus to show her the way, and I’ll ask Him, too”; then she opened her eyes, and by the look of great joy in them, they saw that she knew that her mother was there. But she never spoke again; she knew no waking from that sleep, save in the Paradise of God.

Kneeling there in that sweet calm presence, Birdie’s mother asked for pardon and peace. And when a few days had passed, and she had gone to the clergyman of the Mission Church and told him all the sad story of the past, she went back to Grace, and told her

that Mr. Seymour's advice to her had been to go for a time into one of those homes where the intemperate are by God's blessing reclaimed.

No time was lost. Enquiries were made. At first the reply came that the house was full to overflowing ; but who could resist an appeal founded on such a history ? The opportunity lost now might never again be had of saving that soul. It was now or never ; indeed, no refusal could be allowed ; the arrangements of the house were once more reconsidered, and, as the winter time was coming, and there was less risk from overcrowding, and in the spring there was a hope that new buildings might be added, she was admitted ; and who shall describe the peace which the world cannot give or take away, as each day seemed to carry her farther from her sin and sorrow.

The thought that Birdie had gone before, to shew her the way to Jesus, was the softening hallowing influence of her life ; her newly-found love, for Grace was the other.

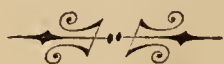
All these things combined made her what she now is, an honest, sober, God-fearing



woman, sorrowing for the past, but hopeful for the future.

But there are others anxious as she was to give up the curse of their life, whose surroundings are not what her's were, who have no little one in the garden of God's Paradise to be a beacon light amid the darkness and temptations of earth.

For their sakes, for whom, as for us, Christ died upon the cross, will you who read this little tale, and who have not before thought seriously upon this subject, give your alms, your time, above all your prayers, to those who so sorely need them? Will you use all your endeavours to place them beyond the reach of temptation, until, their evil habit overcome, strong in the strength of the Lord, they may take their place again in their own homes; aye, more than this, they may take their place at last in the heavenly Jerusalem, and receive the reward promised to him that overcometh?





# Suitable Gifts.

**I**T will be seen by the comparative statement that the average consumption of wine, &c., by every person in the United Kingdom amounts to £4 9s.

There are many men and women who have never felt the temptation, and have never fallen into habits of intoxication ; it is therefore suggested that

## A GIFT OF £5,

the amount nearly of one year's expenditure, would be an appropriate offering towards helping forward the work of recovery and restoration of those who have fallen into drunkenness.

There are no social invalids which require greater care and patience than women inebriates ; it is therefore earnestly hoped that generous offerings may be forthcoming to lighten the burden of those who are responsible for the work.

## A GIFT OF £100.

will provide permanent house accommodation for one patient.

## A GIFT OF 1s. IN STAMPS.

will defray the cost of printing and postage, and leave something for the Hospital.

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It is hoped no one will refuse to give something.  
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*Cheques to be crossed London and County Banking Company.*

*Post Office Orders and Postal Orders to be made payable to F. BLANDY, Woodside Green, and addressed St. Raphael's Hospital, Woodside, Croydon.*



St. Raphael's Hospital  
FOR  
WOMEN INEBRIATES,  
WOODSIDE, NEAR CROYDON.



First Department :

*For Ladies.*

Second Department :

*For the Wives and Friends of  
Artisans and Tradespeople.*

Third Department :

*For poor Working Women.*



Applications for admission to be addressed to  
the Secretary.